1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

A few words from the childhood recollections of Paulino Ngonga Liahuka[1] bring out the facts.

One day we noticed that Sekulu Upalandanda[2] and my father went to the mountain of Kalilonge saying, 'We go to look around (and find out) whether the spirits (*olosande*) have agreed to our moving there.' Then another day we saw that the fathers were coming out of the spirit huts (*atambo*, plural), with the sacred chests (*ovimbangu*, plural), saying, 'We go to start a new village.' When they had arrived under the mountain of Kalilonge, they said, 'The spirits have agreed.' Then when everyone had moved, the elder, whose name had been Upalandanda at Muenesi, now changed his name, declaring, 'I am *Cilembo-camunda* (Shadow of Mountain). From that time the place was called Cilembo.

On seeking a new site the headman's fire in the old village is put out and the procession starts: a girl carries the sacred chest (*ocimbangu*) containing the relics (*ociye*) and the balls of iguana skin, and a boy the sacred bows.[3] They lead the way to the site selected where they cut a pole[4] suitable for a house-wall (*ekoso*), and tie a leaf of the *upu*[5] tree to it, dig a hole into which they put mud made by rain-water (*onata yondombo*),[6] and then together they lift the stick and let it fall into the hole. This is the beginning of the spirit hut (*etambo*), the first house to be built on the new site. The boy and the girl must take part ceremonially in each operation of building the hut. After that they together ignite (*oku tiafula*)[7] the new fire. A hen and a cock are killed, cooked on the new fire, and eaten inside the *etambo* by all who have taken part in the building. The headman and his wife cannot return to the old village but must camp at the new site (*itula*) and keep the new fire alight. In building their houses, the villagers may commute (*oku usala*) from the old site, but often the distance is too great to do this, and

[1] Of Ciyaka, ordained pastor of Elende Church in 1930. He was Hambly's chief informant.

[2] Sekulu Upalandanda was the younger brother of Ngonga's father's father, and therefore grandfather to Ngonga.

[3] The bow (*ohonji*) of each ascendant who is now a guardian spirit (*osande*) of the family.

[4] When this first pole is cut, the axe should first be pointed toward the cardinal directions.

[5] A leaf of the *upu* tree is used in the divorce ceremony. Its use here is a sign of divorce from the old site.

[6] Literally, 'mud of the rainy season'.

[7] This was formerly done with a fire drill (*vide* Hambly, op. cit., Plate XXXV), but not for a number of years now. When I showed the above picture to a group of 150 young men of 17 to 25 years of age, not one of them even knew what it was.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

lated either to cause the spirits to pass him by or to facilitate his cure. In adolescence young people discard the names with which they were born and name themselves (*oku lisapa*) according to their own choice. I have collected the explanations for about two hundred names.

The names of children are used, and that is one reason for choosing them with care, for the name will be heard often by the spirits. It is his superiors and those with whom he has respect-relationships whose names one may not pronounce. A child's name may be affected by whether there are recently deceased siblings, but he is not the reincarnation of such a one. Rather, he may reincarnate an ancestor. This is doubtless one reason for naming him after an ancestor. This, however, is a subject for treatment elsewhere.

The Period of Lying-in (Ocitete)[1]

'During lying-in the work of the mother is to cause the cord to fall from the navel of her child. On the navel she rubs castor-bean charcoal mixed with palm oil, or palm oil mixed with ashes, or with the soot from burning a sleeping-mat of reeds. A chicken feather is required from a wing or the tail, to dip it in the soot. That is done day by day until the navel is freed.' It must be noted that although a large percentage of the babies get infected navels, this does not seem to be as serious among the Ovimbundu as with us. 'For the bed of mother and baby are spread leaves that it may be soft, if possible leaves of the *ongonguila* tree. Over the leaves are spread a sleeping-mat (*esisa*) and some little cloths. During that time the mother does not sleep in the dark. The father must bring firewood and firelogs that it may be warm and light in the house, so that if the baby defecates in the night, it may be wiped properly.' No cloths or diapers are used for babies either at this period or later. An additional reason given for having a good fire in the hut is that the baby is supposed to be very much afraid of the dark.

'During those first days the women come to entertain[2] the mother and to hold the baby. Some bring meal and meat, some meal and beans, some porridge and relish, some sour beer and

[1] *Ocitete* seems to be derived from *oku teta*, to cut, in reference to the cutting of the cord.

[2] *Oku poka*, to provide for and entertain, as for a guest.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

As early as 1600 there were cattle as far north as Benguela, and the Jaggas regarded these as a most valuable part of their plunder. Palms are a characteristic part of the vegetation of Angola north of the Benguela Highlands. Evidently the Jaggas moved extensively in northern Angola because they cut down palms for making wine (Battell, p. 30). The usual method is to tap the top of a standing tree, but the Jaggas were an itinerant people who did not cultivate palms.

Sprinkling the blood of sacrificed animals on a newly kindled fire I have mentioned in connection with Umbundu rites celebrating the founding of a new village. The Jaggas carried out this ceremony before a raiding expedition, when cows and other animals were sacrificed (Battell, p. 33). Battell mentions the use of red *tukula* wood for personal decoration. This wood (*Pterocarpus tinctorius*) is used in many parts of Angola at the present time.

Reference to Battell confirms the information given to me in relation to an old iron gong obtained at Ngalangi. He says (p. 20), "The general did strike his gong, which is an instrument of war that soundeth like a bell, and presently made an oration with a loud voice."

Battell reported that the Jaggas wore beads of ostrich eggshell. Ravenstein, the editor of this volume in the Hakluyt Series, seems to doubt this statement, saying, "There are no ostriches in Angola, and as to beads made of ostrich eggs I can give no explanation." I noted the presence of captive ostriches in southern Angola as far north as Gambos. The Vakuanyama women greatly value their long necklaces of ostrich-eggshell beads. Necklaces made in the north of Angola are traded to the south and conversely, each kind of necklace having a high value due to remoteness of origin. This instance, like many other points, confirms the reliability of Battell's observations in Angola.

Father Jerome Merolla (1682) describes the poison ordeal which was used from the Congo estuary to San Salvador (Churchills' Voyages, II, p. 675). "The aforesaid oath is administered to the supposed traitor by a sort of wizard, who, making a certain composition out of the juices of herbs, serpent's flesh, pulp of fruits, and divers other things, gives it to the supposed delinquent to drink. If guilty (as they tell you) he will immediately fall down in a swoon or trembling to the ground." The marimba was used, and a double iron gong was carried before a chief and struck by an attendant.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

The foregoing facts, when compared with field work among the Ovimbundu, indicate that the old culture of the Congo and northern Angola bears a strong resemblance to Umbundu culture at the present day. A more detailed analysis of this resemblance is made in chapter X.

The following notes dealing with exploration in Angola (1800–1930) are adduced for critical comparison with my own observations among the Ovimbundu.

The work of Sir R. F. Burton describing the exploration of Lacerda and other Portuguese pioneers, is more useful for geographical than for ethnological information. Lacerda's journey to Czambe, south of Lake Moero, was performed in 1798. A mention of veneration for the dead and consultation of the deceased on all occasions of war or of good fortune, is made (p. 127). These are important points in the present tribal life of the Ovimbundu.

Bowditch (1824) writes from information given to him by Almeida and Saldanha. There are valuable references to the Vacilenge, a people adjacent to the Ovimbundu, who refused to kill their cattle, "rather than do which they will endure famine to extremity." This note was made about Long. 15° E. and Lat. 15° S. (p. 34). The cattle were milked, and cattle-raiding by the Ovimbundu was common at this time. Many present-day Ovimbundu do not milk their cattle, but the Vacilenge still follow their milking custom observed before 1824.

Livingstone's journey through northeast and northern Angola in 1853 contains references to the Vachokue who seemed bent on plunder (I, p. 370). Livingstone noted cotton spinning, which I recorded as an occupation of males of the Ovimbundu at Elende. Livingstone, like other early travelers, encountered caravans of Bihéans (Ovimbundu) bearing elephants' tusks and beeswax, commodities, which, along with slaves, formed the chief merchandise of these caravans from the Benguela Highlands (p. 466). Livingstone notes and sketches (Plate XIII, Fig. 10) the double-hardled hoe (p. 442) which is still used.

J. J. Monteiro (I, p. 61) saw the poison ordeal administered. The poison itself was prepared from the thick hard bark of a large tree (*Erythrophlaeum guineense*). The place of observation was Mongue Grande, just south of the Congo estuary, and again Monteiro was present when the poison cup was given to two women at Ambrizette. Of this ordeal there is more to be said when discussing the culture contacts of the Ovimbundu, because the ordeal is a basic factor of

301 The new ornaments had acquired no sentimental value, therefore
321 their price was moderate.

[171] *Omba* shells are to be seen in use from Kipungo southward through Huila, among the Luvando, and among the Vakuanyama of southern Angola. In the places mentioned one may judge the social status [554] of a woman by the number of *omba* shells she wears. A principal wife is usually well supplied with these ornaments.

302 In this southern journey it was noticeable that there was an
171 increasing use of red pigment which is lavishly employed for smearing [294] every kind of ornament, the body, and the hair. Leather belts and skirts of Vakuanyama women are thickly coated with red pigment which is invariably mixed with grease. The red powder is prepared [824] by desiccating a red wood called *tukula* by the Vakuanyama, a name which is used through Angola and the southern Congo area.

412 From Kipungo southward through the Vakuanyama country
171 there is a notable absence of decorative wooden hair combs. On the contrary, delicately carved combs are used by both men and women of the Ovimbundu. The Vasele make such combs, but by far the best [532] examples are made and used by the Vachokue tribe of eastern Angola. Here the decorative design usually includes a well-carved human figure at the top of the comb.

301 Among the Vakuanyama, necklaces of disks made from ostrich
[237] eggshell are worn by the women only. A woman of importance has [554] a dozen loops of such necklaces, each loop being about 125 cm long. These necklaces are so greatly esteemed that only after much persuasion can a woman be induced to part with a single link. Perhaps, as is the case with *omba* shell, there is more than the intrinsic value to be considered. One point is constantly noticed in considering social status and ornament. All the wives of a wealthy man, especially among the Vakuanyama, are made to advertise their husband's position by the profusion of their ornaments and the quality of their leather skirts and belts.

[321] There is, in addition to the necklaces of ostrich-eggshell beads, a highly prized necklace made from small perforated disks of shell having a diameter of about a centimeter. The Vakuanyama women smear a necklace of this kind with grease and *tukula* powder; the [435] value of a necklace 125 cm long is equivalent to that of an ox. In describing these necklaces there is interest in noting that they are traded to the south of Angola from places six hundred miles to the [439] north; therefore their value is to some extent dependent on rarity and distant origin.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

Young unmarried girls of the Luvando tribe wear a large number of leg-bands which extend from the ankles to the knees as a sign that puberty has not been reached. These leg-bands are somewhat roughly twisted from fibrous roots and twigs from which the cortex has been removed. Collars of tough, elastic, cane-like substance are worn by Luvando women, and so numerous are these that the neck is entirely covered. These cane neck-bands are ornamented with burned, incised, geometrical patterns, and, in keeping with other ornaments, are thickly smeared with grease and red powder from *tukula* wood (Plate LIX, Figs. 1, 2).

Women of the Vakipungo and Vakuanyama wear heavy coils of brass or copper wire on their forearms. In southern Angola women wear bracelets of twisted wire which are identical with those worn by Zulu women. Bracelets of beaten trade brass, ornamented with incised geometrical designs, are worn by women of the Ovimbundu, Vakuanyama, Luvando, and Vakipungo tribes. Ovimbundu women now depend largely on trade goods for personal ornament.

Ovimbundu men and women are dressed in trade cloth. Unmarried girls wear one piece of cloth which hangs from the armpits to the knees. A married woman drapes herself with two pieces of cloth, a skirt hanging from her girdle, and an upper piece so folded as to hold her baby tightly to her back. Men wear a single piece of cloth as a skirt; the upper part of the body is bare (Plates XLIX–LI). From the region of Kipungo to the southern border, clothing is of leather. The Vachokue wear trade cloth or bark cloth.

Hairdressing is of many styles. Ovimbundu women braid their hair neatly in strands across their foreheads, and small blue and white trade beads are used to decorate the braids. The hairdressing of the Ovimbundu women is different from that in any other part of Angola. At an early age the hair is trained into two long loops at the back of the head. Then these are covered with black cloth which is bound tightly. The two loops are afterwards studded with brass-headed tacks obtained from a store (Plate XL, Fig. 3).

Luvando women in the region of Kipungo dress the hair to form a large triangular projection from the back of the head. Girls of the Vaheneca tribe near Huila mass the hair with clay to form large "cock's combs." Women of Gambos pass each small plait of hair through hollow reeds. Humbe women do not redden or grease their hair which is massed into three high ridges on the top, while at the sides there are hornlike projections. Vakuanyama women dress their hair with grease and *tukula* powder. A principal wife builds up her

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

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824 Nature lore of the Ovimbundu rightly forms an introduction to other aspects of economic life, because there is no better introduction to ethnological research in the field than that of associating with the people in daily occupations connected with the food supply and industries. In this way a field worker realizes that observation on the part of hunters and food gatherers is fundamental, not merely to economic and social life, but to the growth of language and folklore.

Observation and experiment have led to the selection of many kinds of timber, each having one or more specific uses. Collection of plants is connected with the making of dyes for baskets, a varnish for pots, and a pharmacopoeia for the medicine-man. Minute observation of the habits of animals, primarily carried out to ensure successful hunting, is clearly reflected in the growth of vocabulary, and likewise in the realism and humor of folk tales and proverbs (chapter VIII).

[538]

This chapter is concerned chiefly with a presentation of factual material whose psychological and cultural bearing is more fully dealt with in chapters X–XII.

NATURE LORE

825 The Ovimbundu are keen observers whose knowledge of the natural history of plants and animals is comprehensive. Almost any boy of twelve years of age is able to give the information detailed here. Some of the birds have been identified by Mr. Rudyerd Boulton, Department of Zoology, Field Museum.

Ombo. Ostrich. The knowledge of this bird must come from the south of Angola. In traveling south I first saw ostriches at Humbe. These were domesticated birds.

Epanda. Wattled Crane (*Bugeranus carunculatus*). The informant said, "*Epanda* is a big bird which has long legs and a long neck."

Epumumu. This is the Ground Hornbill (*Bucorvus cafer*) whose black wings are tipped with white. I have observed them from Ganda to Vakuanyama country. They take to flight slowly after hopping heavily for a few paces.

Ocamukongo. From the Umbundu word *ukongo*, a hunter. This bird lives on small buck and rabbits.

Etokailo. This is the smaller bustard called by the Boers knorhaan.

Ohanga. The Guinea Fowl (*Numida meleagris*).

Onjasa. Spur-winged Goose (*Plectropterus gambensis*).

Ongonga. An eagle. The word is used generally for a large bird of prey.

Ohokoholo. The Bateleur Eagle (*Terathopius ecaudatus*). The bird is almost without a tail. This bird is not predatory. It kills snakes but does not take chickens or other small animals.

Ocisselele. A kite, well known because it preys on chickens.

Etalahanga. A hawk which waits in the trees then volplanes on its prey.

Okapamba. A small hawk which preys on chickens.

Enyamahuti. A hawk.

Ocikuamanga. The White-breasted Crow (*Corvus albus*).

Ongwali (*wa-wa*). This is the Red-necked Partridge (*Pternistis afer*).

825 Observation of reptiles is a necessary self-protection as there are many poisonous snakes. The flesh of the python is eaten. Snake-
[524] skin and lizard-skin are occasionally used; for example, in covering a round, hard fruit in order to make a ball for playing a game.

When collecting lizards and snakes I found that each kind had a well-known name, though there was occasional disagreement among the men consulted.

Ocivangoko is a lizard (*Agama planiceps*) about ten inches long whose tail is covered with sharp spines. This reptile has colors of bright blue, red, and orange. *Ovangu* is a large spinous gray lizard (*Agama atricoll*). *Ekangala* (*Gerrhosaurus nigrolineatus*) is a brilliantly colored lizard which burrows deeply into the ground.

Olutanjila is a long slender green snake which hides in trees to capture birds. *Ombandanjila* is a long gray-backed snake with a light green belly. The generic name for snake is *onyoha*. The python is *omoma*. The chameleon (*eloñailo*) seems to be feared, as the men and boys refuse to touch a dead one but always move it with sticks. There is a proverb to the effect that the chameleon though slow always gets there. The refusal to touch even dead reptiles is due to an exaggerated fear of being bitten. I could find no other reason.

824 Trees are of importance in connection with building houses and
313 wood-carving. The qualities of different timbers are well known to the Ovimbundu. For the main part, the collection of medicinal plants and their uses will be described in connection with the medicine-man. The following are the most common trees which are of economic importance.

Usia (pronounced *oosha*). This tree has an edible fruit the size of a walnut. The kernel is valued as a food.

Ombula. This tree provides wood which burns readily. The small skin-covered stools to be found in every hut are often made from this wood.

Ukengo. The fruit has a hard rind.

[757] *Owindo*. This tree has a small acid fruit from which a medicine is made for the cure of painful menstruation.

Usilosilo. The leaf is compound and palmate. The fruit is black.

Usiambiambia. Bears a little red, oval fruit.

Usole. Has a large red fruit.

Usombo. Grows near streams. It has a fruit like that of *okulakula*, but smaller.

[223] *Ukuliungu*. Has a fruit like the berry of a coffee plant. The fruit is used for making mucilage which is used for capturing small birds.

Omanda. When this tree is small, the wood is springy, and is therefore useful for making bows. The wood of the older trees is burned for preparing charcoal which is used in the blacksmith's fire.

Omanda. This is an erect tree having no branches on the lower part. The wood is extensively used in building native huts.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

824 ● 313

Omus. A large tree having clusters of small white flowers which are visited by bees on account of their content of honey. The tree yields a hard wood from which charcoal is prepared. The bark and leaves yield a pigment which is used for dyeing cloth a yellowish brown.

Osui is valuable because it gives a hard wood used for the corner posts of houses. White ants do not attack this wood, which is therefore useful for making the uprights on which granaries are erected.

Okapelangalo. A tree from which planks of hard red wood are obtained. These are used for making doors in village fences.

Osasa or *ekenge* or *usamba.* These trees have small compound leaves which are very similar. The bark of the latter two is used as rope for binding the uprights and the crosspieces in the framework of native houses. *Ekenge* and *usamba* also yield a bark which is beaten into bark cloth in the Ngalangi district.

Ocipalo. The bark is used for binding posts, also for the fabrication of bark cloth.

Ungolo. The roots of this tree yield a dye for cloth. The leaves are said to have a value for curing sore eyes. The mother of a child afflicted with sore eyes chews the leaves, then spits into the child's eyes. [757]

Ongaya. Yields a wood used for making pestles and pounding sticks.

Omako ("iron wood"). This tree has a hard wood which is used for the same purpose.

Onfunge. Gives a wood used in the making of houses, doors, and beehives.

Omone. A large tree which gives planks for building purposes.

Usanje. Yields a useful red timber.

Ulondongandu. A tree with very rough bark. The word *ongandu* means a crocodile. This is the tree which even a crocodile can climb. [757]

Onganja. A tree which yields a fruit having a value as a purgative. The antelope is said to be fond of the fruits of this tree.

Ocikumbeolemba. Gives a resinous fluid which is used in the preparation of lime for snaring birds. [223]

Ulemba. This word is derived from the word *ulembo*, meaning shade. The *ombala* (native capital) of Ngalangi is surrounded by such trees.

Omia. A tree which produces yellow flowers in September. The fruit is not edible but oil is made from it.

Okuku. A tree having fragrant flowers like those of honeysuckle. The thick bark is used in making mats.

Ossoe. A soft wood which is easily whittled with a knife. The figures from Bailundu (Plate XXI, Fig. 5) are often carved from this wood.

Umbolombolo. A soft wood which is not very strong.

Umbangalunda. A small tree which produces bright red fruits. These are used by women for the manufacture of bead necklaces.

Ocilavi. The wood is used for the heads of arrows for shooting birds. This timber is used in the building of pigpens. The branches have projections which are said to guard (*okulava*, to guard) the occupants of the pen.

Itala. From the roots of this tree a medicine for pulmonary complaints is made.

Ukua. This is the baobab, whose habitat is the dry regions. Some of the trees have enormous girth. They are leafless for a great part of the year. The long fruits make gourds. The seeds in the fruits are bitter.

Utuotuo (pronounced *ootwotwo*). From the wood the Ovimbundu make wooden platters and spoons used for serving mush from the large cooking pot.

Ovilili. This tree yields a hard red wood which takes a lustrous polish. For this reason the wood is employed for making ornamental sticks and clubs.

Upondanjamba. This small tree has roots which girls use for making ankle-bands.

824 *Okalalululu.* This tree has leaves which are used in treating a skin disease.
813 *Usendangulusu.* This small tree, only three feet in height, gives straight twigs which are used in making arrow shafts.

FOOD SUPPLY

COLLECTING AND HUNTING

222 Collecting of natural products which serve as food substances is
462 chiefly in the hands of women and children, though an exception has to be made in the instance of honey, which is gathered by men and boys.

Boys diligently search for nests, noting their location so as to be able to visit them again when the fledglings are large enough to serve as food. Large numbers of women and children may be seen
252 gathering caterpillars in gourds. The insides of the caterpillars are
222 squeezed into boiling water to make soup.

When a cloud of locusts appears, as in 1925, the creatures are gathered. They are sometimes fried, or they may be boiled in water, dried, and preserved with salt in earthenware pots.

A number of miscellaneous items of the food supply were mentioned in connection with names of trees whose fruits are gathered.[1]

223 Boys engaged in food-gathering usually carry small bows and
[411] blunt wooden arrows (*ocilavi*). One type of bird arrow is fixed to the bowstring. The forward end of the arrow is split so that it may contain small stones that are ejected when the string is released. From the wild fig tree mucilage is obtained and this is boiled until it forms a thick paste which is smeared on the boughs of trees.
[231] Some of the small birds captured in this way are eaten, others are kept in wicker cages made by children.

343 In all parts of Angola large cylindrical beehives may be seen
171 fixed high in the trees (Plate XC, Fig. 2). Two types of hive have been noted in particular. In the Elende district a hive is made by opposing two half cylinders of wood each about three feet long, so forming a hive which has a diameter of one foot. The ends are covered, with the exception of a small round hole. The whole structure is bound round with grass which is kept in position by lashings of bark. In the neighborhood of Cassanga a difference in the structure of the hives was noticed. This type of hive is made from a cylinder of strong reddish bark, the edges of which are fastened together with stout wooden pegs. The dimensions are the same as for the hive used in Elende, but the hive of bark is uncovered.

231 In the Elende district honey of wild bees is removed from the hives in the months of August and December. One man ascends

[1] [See pp. 138-140, category 116]

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbunda

In addition to pouches, hide is used by the Ovimbundu for the seats of four-legged wooden stools. Before stretching the hide over the wooden frame the edge of the leather is cut into strips which are interlaced on the under side of the stool (Plate XVIII, Fig. 1). There are few evidences of the hide having been dressed; usually the hair is attached. The Ovimbundu understand the dressing of hides in a crude way. The hide is soaked, after which the inner surface is rubbed with ashes. The hair is scraped away and the hide is tightly pegged out. Hide was formerly used for covering wooden boxes in which a king carried his powder and possessions to war. Scraped hide is used to form the tympanum in tubular wooden drums.

In only one part of Angola, notably in the south among the Vakuanyama, is leather used as clothing. Women wear pleated skirts of hide and several broad leather belts, while the men have small leather aprons in front and behind. Men only are the leather workers. The hide is soaked and trampled under foot for many hours in order to soften it and make it pliable; the hair is not removed. Before leather clothing is worn it is thickly greased with a mixture of fat and red powder from *tukula* wood (Plates LXV, Figs. 1–3; LXVII, Fig. 1).

SPINNING AND WEAVING

My interpreter Ngonga remembers the use of a heavy upright loom about twenty years ago, but this loom is not used at the present time among the Ovimbundu. The Ovimbundu have been in contact with Europeans for three centuries. This has not been a close and permanent contact, but it has been sufficient to account for the disappearance of a one-time essential art. There are in Elende some very fine raffia palm trees, but no use is made of the leaf fiber for manufacturing clothes. Bark cloth is not made by the Ovimbundu of Elende, but I have seen the Vangangella and Ovimbundu of Ngalangi engaged in stripping, beating, and preparing bark for use as clothing, which is formed of one piece wound round the body. The bark cloth is not dyed or decorated with patterns.

Frequently at Elende men are seen engaged in spinning cotton which is used for repairs, and not for fabricating garments. The cotton is obtained from a shrub which has reddish leaves and yellow flowers. The cotton may be seen protruding from the calyx in the months of June and July. The man who is winding holds high in his left hand a slender stick which is wrapped for a length of two feet with fluffy cotton. All work of pressing and twisting the cotton into a thread is done by the thumb and index finger of the right hand.

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30)1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

OCCUPATIONAL RITUAL, BELIEF, AND CUSTOM AMONG THE OVIMBUNDU

By WILFRID DYSON HAMBLY

[114] WHEN leader of the Frederick H. Rawson-Field Museum Expedition
121 of 1929–30 one of my chief objects was the assembling of a representative collection of the arts and handicrafts of Angola, and particularly of the Ovimbundu who occupy the Benguela highlands.

[177] The Ovimbundu have been in contact with Europeans for three centuries at least, therefore I was interested to know to what extent daily avocations had become secularized. That a close connection has existed between the sacred and the profane in Negro tribes is well known, and the influence of spiritual beliefs and magical acts in every department of economic life, including agriculture, hunting, fishing, and handicrafts, has been established. But how durable is this dependence of economic life on magical acts and ancestral benediction? How soon does primitive economic life become commercialized on a European pattern?

Other observations of academic interest and practical value relate to division of labor between the sexes, specialization by age and natural aptitude; also the possibility of some callings being of an hereditary nature.

[101] My observations, which were made chiefly in the regions of Bailundu, Elende near Cuma, and Ngalangi, are conveniently classified under the headings of food supply, handicrafts, medicine-men, and education.

FOOD SUPPLY

●824 At the foundation of economic life is nature lore, which among the male
825 population of the Ovimbundu is so detailed and extensive that the knowledge has given rise to a large vocabulary. The highly specialized acquaintance with trees, plants, birds, mammals, and reptiles on the part of most of the men was a surprise to me. Such information was commonly shared by males, and was in no way peculiar to the professional hunter.

I was easily able to collect a list of fifty birds which are readily distinguished by boys (who shoot them with blunt wooden arrows), and all men seemed familiar with forty species of trees, whose timbers, barks, and fruits were distinguished and named. Boys were exceptionally well acquainted with small mammals; including several kinds of rats and mice, which are trapped, boiled, and eaten. For Field Museum I made a collection of snakes and lizards; a task which again showed the native power of observation and adequacy of vocabulary. Some reptiles, whose re-

5: Hambly E-5 (1929-30) 1934 FP 13 Mbundu FP13

824 825 semblance for a time caused confusion in my mind, were well known to be distinct, though occasionally a prolonged and serious argument would arise among the old men respecting the correct Umbundu names for two similar snakes.

The cries of birds are interpreted in terms of human conversation: thus the female hornbill says to her mate, "I'm going; I'm going; I'm going to our village;" to which the male replies, "Don't go. The rain has come; let us plant." Another bird says, "Where will the guests stay? where? where? where?" This is an intimation that strangers will visit the village. All animals play a part in folk stories: human beings when introduced are usually of secondary importance.

Nature lore is, of course, fundamental to industries, since the artisans must know the best timbers for particular purposes. Thus certain woods yield the best charcoal for a blacksmith's forge; other woods are essential for house building because the timbers resist attacks of termites; again certain trees yield bark for making rope; while other woods are used for carving animals and household utensils.

[462] I am not sure of the extent to which women participate in nature lore; but certainly their knowledge cannot equal that of the men, since women are concerned chiefly with agriculture, domestic work, care of children, and collection of firewood. Yet women and little children are collectors. I have seem many of them together gathering caterpillars which are to be made into soup. Women know the plants that will yield dyes for basketry, and from women some of the bird calls were obtained. The conversation of men bears on their occupations and the nature lore fundamental to these; therefore women must learn, though perhaps only by unconscious absorption.

224 In connection with a study of food supply the occupation of hunting comes most closely to the general nature lore mentioned above. Here a distinction should be made between hunting as a general occupation for males, and hunting by a professional who gives his life to the work. The only occasion on which women and children assist hunters is during a communal hunt, when all the inhabitants of a village fire the dry grass and aid in the capture of game by shouting and driving the frightened animals.

A professional hunter is usually called ukongo, more rarely onyanga. The occupation is not hereditary. A boy has to serve two years with a professional hunter before his initiation. The principal guests at the initiation feast are professional hunters, who alone may dance, though a miscellaneous company is present. The boy who seeks initiation is required to keep quite still until he feels the "spirit on his head;" then he distributes meat to the people present. The meat used at the feast is that of antelope shot by